

Remarks

Reconsideration of this Application is respectfully requested.

Upon entry of the foregoing amendment, claims 13-30 are pending in the application, with claims 13 and 22 being the independent claims. Claims 19 and 28 are sought to be cancelled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter therein. These changes are believed to introduce no new matter, and their entry is respectfully requested.

Based on the above amendment and the following remarks, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all outstanding rejections and that they be withdrawn.

I. Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 13, 22, 17 and 27 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite because of insufficient antecedent basis. Applicants believe the Examiner meant to cite claim 18, rather than claim 17, under this rejection. Therefore, claims 13, 18, 22 and 27 have been amended, as indicated above, to remedy this matter. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, be reconsidered and withdrawn.

II. Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

A. Rejection of Claims 13-18 and 22-27

Claims 13-18 and 22-27 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Pat. Appl. Pub. No. 2006/0048977 to Akashima *et al.*

("Akashima") in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,628,768 to Omura *et al.* ("Omura").

Applicants respectfully traverse.

Independent claims 13 and 22 have been amended to include features of cancelled claims 19 and 28, respectively. Amended claims 13 and 22 now include the feature of a crawler traveling unit including: a drive sprocket; an idler; a track roller provided between the drive sprocket and the idler; a crawler belt wound around the drive sprocket, the idler and the track roller; and a shaft rotatably supporting the track roller, wherein the shaft rotatably supporting the track roller is divided into parts that are connected to each other through an elastic member."

The Examiner acknowledges that Akashima, as modified in light of Omura, "does not explicitly disclose a shaft rotatably supporting the track roller is divided into plural parts, and the divided shafts are connected to each other through an elastic member," with respect to dependent claims 19 and 28. (Office Action at 8, 10.) Independent claims 13 and 22, as amended, now include such a feature. The Examiner asserts that FIG. 7 of U.S. Patent No. 4,834,478 to Stevens *et al.* ("Stevens") discloses a shaft "rotatably supporting a track roller 80 which is divided into plural parts, wherein an elastic member 87 connects the shafts." (Office Action at 8, 10.) However, reference numeral 87, which the Examiner cites as the "elastic member," is merely a laterally spaced bearing "seated within the tubular casing for rotatably supporting the cross shaft." (Stevens at col. 5, ll. 46-48.) Nowhere does Stevens teach or suggest that this bearing is, or can be, elastic, nor that such an embodiment would "allow for a stronger connection increasing the overall integrity [and] reducing overall maintenance costs," as asserted by the Examiner. (Office Action at 8, 10.) As such, the combination of Akashima, Omura and Stevens cannot render the claimed invention obvious.

For at least these reasons, independent claims 13 and 22, as amended, are patentable over the cited references. Claims 14-18 and 23-27 depend from and add features to claims 13 and 22, respectively, and are therefore also patentable for at least these reasons. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the rejection of claims 13-18 and 22-27 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) be reconsidered and withdrawn.

B. Rejection of Claims 19-21 and 28-30

Claims 19-21 and 28-30 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Akashima in view of Omura and further in view of Stevens. Applicants respectfully traverse.

The features of dependent claims 19 and 28 have been included into amended independent claims 13 and 22, respectively. As discussed above, Stevens does not teach or suggest that the bearing which the Examiner equates to the elastic member of the claimed invention is, or can be, elastic, nor that such an embodiment would "allow for a stronger connection increasing the overall integrity [and] reducing overall maintenance costs," as asserted by the Examiner. (Office Action at 8, 10.) As such, the combination of Akashima, Omura and Stevens cannot render the claimed invention obvious.

Claims 19 and 28 have been cancelled, rendering their rejection moot. Claims 20-21 and 29-30 depend from and add features to claims 13 and 22, respectively, and are therefore also patentable for at least the same reasons stated above. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the rejection of claims 19-21 and 28-30 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) be reconsidered and withdrawn.

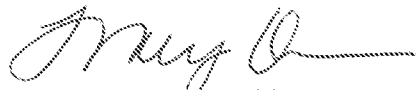
Conclusion

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding rejections and that they be withdrawn. Applicants believe that a full and complete reply has been made to the outstanding Office Action and, as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

Prompt and favorable consideration of this Amendment and Reply is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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